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Letter dated 1 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, of 16 July 2001, on illegal exploitation of natural resources and misappropriation of property by the Abkhaz separatist regime in Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter **Chkheidze**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 August 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia deems it necessary to bring to the attention of the international community the increasingly dangerous scale of extermination and illegal exploitation of natural resources and other properties in the territory controlled by the separatist regime in Abkhazia, Georgia.

It is distressing that the Abkhaz separatist leadership, for the purpose of personal enrichment, continues to break up and plunder industrial and agricultural complexes and vend them for a pittance outside Georgia. The regime illegally misappropriates medical resort facilities and their adjacent territories to foreign juridical or physical persons. The international community and the Government of Georgia have, on numerous occasions, unequivocally stated that decisions taken by the separatist regime regarding the utilization of real estate or any other property in the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia, are illegal and void.

The alarming scale of exploitation of the natural resources in Abkhazia, Georgia, in addition to blatantly violating the sovereign rights of Georgia, causes serious damage to the environment and international norms and regulations on the utilization of natural resources and the protection of the environment are customarily ignored. Particularly distressing is the felling of precious varieties of trees and forests protected under the endangered species list (Red Book) of Georgia, and the contraband of same outside the State borders, which causes irreversible damage to the unique ecosystems of the entire region.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia would like to point out that Presidential decree N2 of 10 January 2001, which was issued to save the endangered trees and forests, set out a legal regime for the utilization of natural resources of Georgia. The Ministry calls upon all concerned countries and specialized international organizations to strictly adhere to the legal regime and the constitution of Georgia, which stipulate that the Georgian supreme bodies have the exclusive right to administer a system of environmental protection, as well as legislation on land, minerals and natural resources for the whole territory of Georgia.

The Ministry would like to once again express its gratitude for the vital humanitarian assistance Georgia receives from the international community, including for the Abkhazia region, and would like to reiterate that the central authorities do not at present have the capability to fully control the borders of the region. Consequently, the Ministry would like to point to the legislation of Georgia, which clearly regulates humanitarian assistance to Abkhazia, Georgia, and restricts any commercial, trade or business relations with the region without the prior notification of the central authorities (S/1999/1058).

The Ministry would like to highlight that the natural and material resources of Abkhazia, Georgia, should be utilized for the restoration of its economy and the improvement of the living conditions of the population of the region, not for the benefit of a few among the illegitimate regime.

The Government of Georgia hereby appeals to the international community and the global environmental society to take steps to halt the irresponsible exploitation of the natural resources in Abkhazia, Georgia. Joint international inventory and assessment of the state of forests in the region conducted by intentionally recognized institutions and experts could help curb the trend, which has grown to a threatening scale.

Tbilisi, 16 July 2001